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Family in the Contemporary World Catholic Social Teaching and Gender

Abstract: Contemporary man confronts a dilemma. In search of his or her own identity and a model of life in human community, an individual can choose between two attitudes which exclude each other. The first one is shaped by the Catholic Social Teaching and is based on a foundation of Christian anthropology. It leads to self-identification within the framework of a double model of the human being: man and woman. Consequently, someone identified with his or her biological sex tends toward self-fulfillment in the traditional social and cultural role. The second attitude is based on the postmodern deconstruction of the category of sex. It leads to a blurred vision of one's own sexual identity, denial of opposition and complementarity of man and woman and rejection of traditional criteria of choosing one's way of life. This paper presents the arguments of these two attitudes and the probable consequences of choices made within the framework of both options discussed.

Keywords: family, gender, Catholic social teaching, axiological competencies, deconstruction of reality

Introduction

In the contemporary world there is a dispute, the consequences of which may prove to be important for the future of our entire Western civilization. The axis of this dispute constitutes two notions related to each other: gender and family. Especially the first of these concepts is subjected to a sharp criticism by the supporters of a new type of concept, whose distinctive feature is the attempt to

replace the traditionally used and commonly understood term *sex* with the other, specially adapted for an effective dissemination of new ideas, and borrowed from the language of science, that is, the term ‘gender’.¹

The extent and significance of this dispute is much broader than it could be, due to the superficial analysis of individual texts, which appear on the publishing market and in media within the context of constantly ongoing dispute. It is something more than the discrepancies in terminology, it is more than discussions on the traditional model of the family and its social functions, and it is more than a continuation of emancipatory movements that are increasingly demanding new forms of equality of sexes. It is impossible to separate this issue, due to which a fight with words and insinuations, arguments and emotions takes place, from a global vision of the world, human being, and society, and that which is associated with that vision, namely, a strategy of understanding or designing the purpose and meaning of specific people’s own, individual existence, to whom public speeches of people involved in the dispute are addressed.

It is important for us to understand how different these two, constantly confronted with each other, though not directly, models of reality are. The size of this difference entails the radicalism of demands addressed to us all by those who do not accept the present status quo and expect far-reaching changes, and even try to make such changes by themselves or initiate them with their statements and activities. The changes proposed (and in part also provoked) by a party active to the dispute are to be made primarily in the areas of language, which we use to talk about sex and family matters. It does not mean that controversies are purely verbal. Specialists in the study of social reality long time ago have abandoned the assumption that words are just forms of subjective references made by individual language users as regards the unchanging, objectively existing reality of things, facts, and processes. The vast majority of scholars in the social and cultural studies today represent the constructionist standpoint, according to which our expressions (language constructs) do not reflect a pre-existing reality, knowable regardless of language competence, but themselves create social reality, or at least give it a new, previously non-existent meaning.²

¹ See *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, 6th Edition, 2000*: Under the entry *Gender* indeed on the very first position, the explanation is provided: “The fact of being male or female”; but points 2 and 3 refer to—the chronologically earlier—grammatical meaning: “(in some languages) each of the classes (masculine, feminine, and sometimes neutral) into which nouns, pronouns, and adjectives are divided. Different genders have different endings, etc. [or] (in some languages) the division of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives into different genders.” This was also pointed out by Karolina Krasuska: “the Anglo-Saxon term *gender*—before designating the grammatical gender—was derived from the American sexology” (term *Gender* in: *Gender Encyclopedia. Gender in Culture*. Warszawa 2014).

² See Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Kenneth Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009).

Anyone who accepts the theoretical assumptions of constructivism, must also accept, as a consequence, that change in the way of talking about any object alters the object or gives it a new meaning which is different from the previous one. Some members of the so-called third-wave feminism are guided by such hope in regard to the area of human sexuality. Much attention to the role of language in creating and transforming reality was devoted for example by Judith Butler in her books *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997) and *Undoing Gender* (2004). Therein the author expresses the “belief that reality can be reduced to the rank of a text. The language becomes the place and the means of constructing reality. By constant appearance of new narratives referring to the idea of *gender fables*, it is possible to be triggered from any cultural determinants. In the new, tolerant world where neither at the level of moral, nor legal issues, there shall be no differences between the whole range of sexual identities and behaviors resulting from them, sex becomes liquid and possible to be changed by the individual just by ‘overwriting’ a new narrative on the existing one. A change in language (*linguistic turn*) will lead gradually to a change in moral norms (*ethical turn*), and finally to adapting the law to the newly constructed reality and creating new institutions.”³

The list of demands of gender supporters does not end on the calls for the implementation and dissemination of the new language, and, as a result, a change of reality and new meanings to things, events, and actions. They also want the change in language to change the thinking of modern people. This should be done in such a way for the transformed thinking to motivate people to take other decisions and self-creational activity than previously, in order to implement a radically new design of humanity. On the one hand, it would be based on the results of the ongoing scientific studies that constantly bring new discoveries, changing approach to biological, psychological, social and cultural sex, and formation processes of individual, one’s sexual identity, whereas on the other—on the universal acceptance of the individual’s right to happiness, well-being, and satisfaction with one’s own life, and the right must include first and foremost the freedom to choose gender roles and ways of satisfying sexual needs.

Marguerite A. Peeters, referring to his research, conducted since 1994, says that one of the key elements of the strategy of dissemination of the way of thinking derived from the feminist movements and continued under the label of “gender,” was to change the official language of international standards, arrangements, and papers, mainly those published under the aegis of the United Nations. The researcher writes: “Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 UN began the construction of a new global agreement on the norms, values,

³ Marian Machinek, “Płaszczyzny konfrontacji antropologii teologicznej z ideą gender,” in *“Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich.” Afirmacja osoby ludzkiej odpowiedzią nauk teologicznych na ideologiczną usurpację genderyzmu*, ed. Andrzej Pastwa (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 2012), 16–17.

and priorities of the international cooperation at the beginning of a new era, called globalization. The construction of this consensus has taken place mainly through a series of nine major international conferences [...]. During these meetings, a number of 'new paradigms' expressed in a new language were adopted. Gender is one of them. The term 'gender' came into the language of the documents prepared by UN Member States in the early 90s under the influence of feminists [...]. UN Conferences, held after the Cold War, became the scene of a series of silent revolutions, taking place through language and consensus [...]. Looking at the language of the legal instruments adopted before 1990, the use of the term 'gender' and expressions therefrom derived it [...] is not only new, but also a turning point in intergovernmental speeches. Human rights treaties relate essentially to men and women, spouses, parents, mothers or husbands and wives, when raising the equality of all human beings (in dignity and in the face of the law) or issues regarding family, marriage, and education of children. They use the word *sex* when addressing the problem of non-discrimination. The International Bill of Rights also recognizes the family (in the singular—not 'families') for the natural and fundamental basis of society, having a right to be protected by society and the state, based on a marriage between a man and a woman, contained only by full and free consent of the spouses, clearly understood in the context of these documents as a husband and a wife, a man and a woman. It confirms the inner dignity—internal, that is, belonging to their own nature—of all members of the human family. [...] The function of the language is to call these realities as they are. Human rights treaties are still, to a certain point, to honor this function. The function of the law is not really the creation of reality and truth, but identifying what is right. If it is not, the law and universality would be an arbitrary dictate. Since the gender revolution is a process of deconstruction of universal realities, [...] it is not surprising that the language calling these realities tends to disappear [...]. A new semantic package has appeared, in which [the term] 'gender' is only one of the elements. [Others are] health and sexual and reproductive rights (rather than procreation), the family in all its forms or different forms of family (deliberately vague to cover 'all possible options'), instead of [just] family, safe abortion, freedom of choice, stereotypes (instead of complementarity), equal partners (rather than spouses), pregnancies called 'forced', only to name a few examples. Since the UN conference in Beijing (1995), the language characteristic of gender spread quickly in politics at the international, supranational, national, and local level.²⁴

Appeals and demands aimed at this kind of transformation of thinking currently get to quite a fertile social ground. For some time now, social and cultural studies have formulated diagnoses, which show that people living today are

²⁴ Marguerite A. Peeters, *Le gender: une norme politique et culturelle mondiale? Outil de discernement* (Edition Mame, 2013), 85–86, 92–94.

probably one of the last generations living in a spiritual environment, formed by centuries of development of the Mediterranean civilization. The breakthrough (at least in the sense of subjective experience) role of the current, almost simultaneously marking the beginning of the third millennium, social and civilizational crisis, is described, among others, by Krzysztof Wielecki: "The present times could say be easily referred to as a state of a deep post-industrial crisis, which is the result of major civilizational changes, especially technological ones, but also some intellectual looping of people, a kind of an evolution of intellectual currents, the collective imagination, value systems, etc. [...] We live in a time of crisis of civilization, which makes us experience a dramatic and historic rupture of two eras: the already passing industrialism and the new, which we cannot yet name, and that is born before our eyes. [...] Differentiating factor is the crisis of the social order, violating the stability of social structures, major social institutions, from the state to the family, culture, economy, etc. It deepens the suffering, the lack of confidence, a crisis of identity, confusion, anxiety, despair, and narcissism of a modern man."⁵

This and similar diagnoses do not to a large extent mention the mental aspects of culture that are directly related to the development of science and technology and their practical applications, but most of all they mention the axiological environment, shaping the preferential thinking styles, the competence in knowledge and recognition of values—above all, moral ones, though not only—and the attitude towards the standards and obligations arising from the current shape of the social order. The aforementioned axiological environment consists of a set—for many centuries relatively stable—space of values that are reflected in works of art, philosophical treatises, legal and political systems and traditions and customs deeply penetrating daily lives of people. Meanwhile, today we observe "a strong trend in the social sphere of detaching the personal and social life from ethical standards. This tendency in a certain sense was also formerly elaborated. Nietzsche, among others, pointed it out in his essay, entitled *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Today, however, it is characterized by particular dynamics. Axiology itself is treated as a specific restriction of freedom, both the individual and social one. Exemplification of this fact can be a problem of lawmaking in multiple social beings. Basing legal standards on ethical principles is regarded as a specific form of the bondage of law. Therefore, the existence of an ethical order, which in the field of lawmaking would make the standards of conduct, is firmly rejected."⁶

⁵ Krzysztof Wielecki, "Kryzys postindustrialny, osobowość i zdrowie psychiczne," in *"Inny" człowiek w "innym" społeczeństwie? Europejskie dyskursy*, ed. Piotr Mazurkiewicz and Krzysztof Wielecki (Warszawa: Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008), 127.

⁶ Henryk Skorowski, "Aksjologiczne dylematy współczesności," in *Kryzys postindustrialny interpretacje, prognozy. Perspektywa europejska*, ed. Piotr Mazurkiewicz and Krzysztof Wielecki (Warszawa: Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007), 87–88.

In today's society there is also a comparatively low level of axiological and normative competence. This is due to the fact that the values that we believe in and strive every day to embody, and also those that lie at the root of standards of conduct, as well as the practical arrangements, convictions, and worldviews are rarely subjected to reflection and critical discussion. We do not think about them every day, we do not talk about them and, consequently, we are little aware of the fact how much our opinions, evaluations, choices, and decisions depend on the structure and order of individual axiological maps, stored and operating partly below the threshold of consciousness.

At the same time, it escapes our attention that, at any moment, through many news channels which are used by modern society, a stream of messages comes to us, containing—apart from literally expressed content—a rich and an important axiological component. Little are we aware of the fact that at all levels of communication—from the intimate to the mass one—we pass not only the pure information, but also a number of elements that affect our perception of the sphere of values. However, this occurs on the margins of our observation field or completely outside its boundaries. When we consciously analyze the content of the received messages, only in exceptional cases, we draw attention to exploring, discovering or creating values taking place through them. In practice, these are the axiological components of contents assimilated by us, which more durably and effectively than the information content affect our attitudes, shape our own priorities of evaluation and preferences, and indirectly are able to greatly help to change the existing beliefs. It is a natural and necessary process, since every day, while living and experiencing the richness of the external and internal contents filling our lives, we concentrate not so much on an intellectual reflection (except for very few cases), but on what makes our life happy and fulfilled, or on the contrary—pitiful and miserable. A French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas noticed: “We live from ‘good soup’, air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc. These are not objects of representations. We live from them. [...] They are always in a certain measure—and even the hammers, needles, and machines are—objects of enjoyment, presenting themselves to ‘taste’ [...]. These contents are lived: they feed life.”⁷ These extremely insightful and accurate observations by Lévinas concern not only our communication with material things, but also—as he noted—with ideas. Our attitude to ideas, thoughts and opinions, which we feed ourselves with or which we meet by participating in discussions and by assimilating the content of the publications or media broadcasts, does not rely on purely rational assimilation and exclusively rational analysis, but—as Lévinas wrote—we live from them, we experience their contents and their way of public presentation, we delight in them or we feel repugnant, sometimes fearful, un-

⁷ Emanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University, 2011), 110–11.

certain, or anxious. We react lively to these components of stimuli coming to us from the outside world which—often bypassing the sphere of the rational—are moving sensitive chords of our feelings, emotions, moods, referring to what (as claimed by Roman Ingarden) “we know, not knowing” about values.⁸ Each of these countless elements with which we meet in everyday existence, appears in the field of our attention always in some axiological aura. We feel it much more deeply, more subtly and variously than it seems to result from the poverty of words and language communication devoted to this area of human experience. In relation to the values, the greater part of our life is set in the non-verbal space, in the realm of that which is unspeakable—which does not mean that it is void and unstable. For, generally, we do not make an introspection and self-reflection from this angle, which is why we are often vulnerable and exposed to loot of “the pedlars of ideas,” various manipulators who—sometimes honestly and in good faith, but sometimes cynically and hypocritically—recruit, among us, the followers of all sorts of ideas. Realizing this fact should make us approach, much more cautiously, the attempts to influence our way of living and feeling the world, made, for example, under the pretext of acquainting us with the latest achievements of human thought in this or any other field. Gender studies may be, let us say, one of these fields.

The thing that makes it difficult, and sometimes quite impossible to reliably assess the information, ideas, opinions and assessments coming to us, is also—due to a sharp and too fast, for our capacity for cultural adaptation, development of techniques of transmission and dissemination of information—a chaos and an information glut, which we live in every day with no possibility of escape. One of the paradoxical effects of constant overloading with knowledge is a growing sense of detachment from the reality. Due to the permanent impact of ubiquitous multimedia communication, a contemporary man almost completely lost the feeling of living in a single, real, and concrete reality, arranged according to regular laws, successively learned through science. Residents of civilized parts of the world are constantly immersed in the multiplicity of parallel or intersecting narratives on what it is that surrounds us. This creates the false impression that we live not in one but in many worlds at the same time. This is because it is increasingly more difficult to find a common denominator referring the recipients of certain narratives to still the same, original, pre-theoretical, co-presupposed world (formerly known as real or actual). Particular systems of description of the reality surrounding us, co-present in the public communication, are in fact equipped with their own, separate catalogues of assumptions, both expressed directly in the form of axioms or postulates, as well—which in practice is not less important—camouflaged in the form of presuppositions

⁸ Cf. Roman Ingarden, “Czego nie wiemy o wartościach,” in *Przeżycie—dzieło—wartość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1966), 83–127.

(such as research shows, for example, by Elisabeth Loftus (see Loftus 1974)), recipients of the messages are easier to assimilate and more likely to believe in the content of presuppositions unexpressed directly, than in the literal content of verbalized statements). These lists of assumptions are so divergent that there is no possibility of synthesizing from them a single coherent image, which could reveal or point to the objectively, originally existing real being. Therefore, more and more popular are concepts of the kind that was announced by Jean Baudrillard, exposing a bold thesis already on the front cover: “Le réel n’existe plus” (Reality does not exist).⁹

The problem arises, how to live in a deconstructed reality, which cannot be defined or separated from fiction.¹⁰ The solution—although it is needed for one to be able to do anything with his or her life—is by no means easy. Especially that there is a lack of clear guidance and clear indications what strategy of proceedings should be taken in this situation. So we are stuck with our own cleverness and forced to seek individual projects of orientation in an inconsistent and unstable universe of the narrative. What solution we choose, will have a major impact on our decisions, including those which are of key importance for our whole future life.

One of the most important areas in which we make significant choices and make key decisions, is planning and starting a family or living alone or in loose, unstable relationship with one or more female or male partners. Every individual at some point of his or her life is faced with the need of taking one of those decisions. To develop decidedly this dimension of existence, which involves the selection of a model of an every-day intimate bond with others, a modern man has at his or her disposal everything that constitutes the content of worldviews tenders present in the public discourse. And this discourse, as we indicated at the beginning, is now dominated by an ongoing, for several years, dispute between supporters of the two main options. The first option, commonly referred to as conservative, groups around the standpoint of the Catholic Church and—in principle matters differing little from it—statements made by representatives of other Christian denominations. The second, of which preachers and propagators

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1981).

¹⁰ The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council realized the growing difficulties in the correct orientation in an increasingly complex world, so they posted the following passage in the Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et spes*: “True, there is a growing exchange of ideas, but the very words by which key concepts are expressed take on quite different meanings in diverse ideological systems. Finally, man painstakingly searches for a better world, without a corresponding spiritual advancement. Influenced by such a variety of complexities, many of our contemporaries are kept from accurately identifying permanent values and adjusting them properly to fresh discoveries. As a result, buffeted between hope and anxiety and pressing one another with questions about the present course of events, they are burdened down with uneasiness. The same course of events leads men to look for answers; indeed, it forces them to do so” (*Gaudium et spes*, Introductory Statement, pt. 4).

define their views as progressive or revolutionary, is a set of convictions and ideas centered on the category of gender.

It is worth reiterating that the criteria that now guide people seeking the self-determination and wanting to define or create their own identity (including sexual), more rarely refer to the hope of discovering objective truth, the knowledge of which will clearly allow the cognition of the structure of the issue, about which we think, on the basis of which to design an adequate project of practical recommendations derived from the contents of acquired knowledge. Instead, the modern man is looking for subjectively credible and convincing story that will allow him or her to make a self-identification within the selected model for understanding of a human being and his or her life's vocation, which would rely on the pursuit of such a set of values that awakens in him or her the biggest, the most noticeable spiritual resonance.

In the following part, I want to concentrate on two aspects of the situation. One of them will be an attempt to reconstruct and concisely present the main objectives and theses of both proposals of understanding the role of the family in human life, including the consideration of the axiological dimension of each node. The second—reflection on the consequences of the fact of bringing us, the people now living, to such a choice.

The Man and the Family in Light of Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic (and also more broadly Christian) family teaching is founded on the basic assumptions of Christian anthropology. An indelible and unmistakable starting point is the belief of the existence of eternal, constant, invariant human nature. Polish bishops in a letter to the followers point out that “this Christian vision is not some arbitrarily imposed norm, but flows from the reading of the nature of the human person, the nature of marriage and the family.”¹¹

Key elements of the Catholic teaching on man, being a basis for thinking about being consistent with the Will of God, vocation of marriage and family, can be found in numerous documents of the Church, including, among others, in the post-conciliar Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*. In Chapter I of the first part of this document (“The Church

¹¹ List pasterski Episkopatu Polski na Niedzielę Świętej Rodziny 2013 r., accessed June 1, 2015, http://episkopat.pl/dokumenty/5545.1,List_pasterski_na_Niedziele_Swietej_Rodziny_2013_roku.html.

and Man's Calling"), titled "The Dignity of the Human Person," in paragraph 12, we read: "Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created 'to the image of God,'" is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures (1) that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory [*Gaudium et spes*, Chapter 1, paragraph. 12], and in paragraph 14: "Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him." The second part of the "Pastoral Constitution," titled "Some Problems of Special Urgency," begins with a chapter titled "Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and the Family." There are, among others, the following statements: [paragraph 52] "The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. [...] the family, in which the various generations come together and help one another, grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the foundation of society. All those, therefore, who exercise influence over communities and social groups should work efficiently for the welfare of marriage and the family. [...] Christians, redeeming the present time and distinguishing eternal realities from their changing expressions, should actively promote the values of marriage and the family, both by the examples of their own lives and by cooperation with other men of good will. Thus, when difficulties arise, Christians will provide, on behalf of family life, those necessities and helps which are suitably modern."

According to the Christian doctrine, a man was created at the dawn of history in God's image, after His likeness. The Creator has endowed him with reason, free will, and other qualities that make up the essence of humanity. One of the elements of unchanging human nature is sex. According to the teaching of the Church, God's plan for humanity was to create it male and female (Gn 1:27). Separation of the sexes is a gift that allows human beings to be fertile and to fulfill a divine commandment expressed in words: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gn 1:28).

The sex of a man is also a source of vocation to family life. Characteristics of a good, happy, and functional family come from specific traits of human nature. From the evidence indicated in the study of theology of the family, it follows that its basic features are monogamy, durability, and indissolubility, while the spouses creating it, treat each other with love, fidelity, and responsibility for each other and for the offspring born in their relationship. Marriage and family are not merely human reality, since by entering into the marriage, the husband and wife use the sacramental grace.

Jerzy Bajda formulates the main theses of the teaching of the Catholic Church on the place of the family in human and society life as follows: "The family is a human reality in the strictest sense of the word. The subject of the family is the human being, as a person and as a community, as an individual and as a family society. The subject matter of the family, on the other hand, its

drama, the content of its history, is an authentic human life, the deepest interpersonal relationships, as well as the deepest and most fundamental reference to relevant events and issues of human existence. It is the human reality, already in a genetic sense, since the man originated from the family (both as an individual and as the humanity), already in a formal sense, because only the fullness of family relationships shows the correct shape of human life; already in the final and normative sense, for all human activity in the world receives a real human value only by its relation to the family.”¹²

The Church emphasizes the profound connection between the reality of the marriage and the family and the supernatural bond that connects God and a human being, which is realized most fully in the relationship of Christ with the earthly community of the Church. The International Theological Commission, established in 1978 at the Gregorian University in Rome, states: “In the New Testament, a Christian marriage received a higher dignity, namely, it reveals the mystery that takes place between Jesus Christ and the Church. The theological interpretation highlights this analogy more deeply: the highest love and devotion to the Lord through His blood and faithful and irrevocable adherence to the Church-bride is a benchmark and an example for Christian marriage.”¹³ Polish theologian Jerzy Laskowski comments on this provision as follows: “The text of the Letter of St. Paul to Ephesians reveals the qualities of Christian marriage. These are: selfless love, unity, fidelity, indissolubility, and sacramental power, which make the Christian marriage enlivened with faith and personal love, and become a sign of unity between Jesus Christ and the Church.”¹⁴ The same author points out the important role of the documents of the Second Vatican Council in the clarification of the Catholic doctrine on the family. He writes, among other things: “Teaching of the contemporary Church on marriage and family was described by the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [...]. Marital love is shown in this document in the personalistic dimension. It is emphatically underscored that love requires the involvement of the whole person: the mind, the will, and the feelings, and demands the opening to the entire personality of a spouse: to his spirit and body, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual life. [...] The model of the Catholic marriage cannot give up such qualities as: exclusion, indissolubility, fertility, and the sacramental nature.”¹⁵ The quoted author draws attention to the important property of the Catholic family model, namely its flexibility, which allows adaptation

¹² Jerzy Bajda, “Powołanie małżeństwa i rodziny. Próba syntezy teologiczno-moralnej,” in *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, vol. 1, ed. Kazimierz Majdański et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Teologii Katolickiej, 1980), 7.

¹³ Jerzy Laskowski, *Małżeństwo i rodzina w świetle nauki Soboru Watykańskiego II*, 2nd ed., expanded (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1982), 280.

¹⁴ Ibid., 280–81.

¹⁵ Ibid., 281–82.

to changing circumstances and cultural backgrounds while remaining within the same essential features and requirements resulting from them: “The Model of the Catholic marriage can take many forms. There are no major obstacles for it to be surfaced in the form of partnership marriage.”¹⁶ “The modern model of the Catholic marriage should correspond to the current development of the society, should be rooted in the sources of Revelation and resonate with the latest teaching of the Church. The most adapted to current conditions of social life seems to be a model of marriage as a partnership, in which both—husband and wife—jointly decide on matters of the family, and the emotional and psychological bond plays a greater role in mutual contacts of material-property relationships. This model [...] has a relatively high structural flexibility, allowing the adjustment of marriage patterns to the changing external conditions.”¹⁷

The Catholic bishops have spoken out on two successive general synods, devoted to family issues, on the subject of specific conclusions, resulting in theology and Christian anthropology in order to deepen reflections on marriage and the family. The first one was held from 26th September to 25th October, 1980, in Rome, at the beginning of the pontificate of John Paul II, the other was summoned by Pope Francis and debated from 5th to 19th October, 2014. In the final documents, drafted after the Synod of 1980, one can find, among others, the following statements: “III. God’s Plan for Marriage and the Family. [...] In a special way the family is called to carry out this divine plan. It is, as it were, the first cell of the church, helping its members to become agents of the history of salvation and living signs of God’s loving plan for the world. God created us in his own image (cf. Gn 1:26), and he gave us the mission to increase and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it (cf. Gn 1:28). To carry out this plan man and woman are joined in an intimate union of love for the service of life. God calls spouses to participate in his creative power by handing on the gift of life. [...] IV. The Family’s Response to God’s Plan. Just as we are doing, you also are seeking to learn what your duties are in today’s world. In looking at the world, we see facing you certain important tasks of education. You have the tasks of forming free persons with a keen moral sense and a discerning conscience, together with a perception of their duty to work for the betterment of the human condition and the sanctification of the world. Another task for the family is to form persons in love and also to practice love in all its relationships, so that it does not live closed in on itself but remains open to the community, moved by a sense of justice and concern for others, as well as by a consciousness of its responsibility toward the whole of society. It is your duty to form persons in the faith—that is, in knowledge and love of God and eagerness to do his will in all things. It is also your task to hand on sound human and Christian values and to

¹⁶ Ibid., 283.

¹⁷ Ibid., 279.

form persons in such a way that they can integrate new values into their lives. The more Christian the family becomes, the more human it becomes.”¹⁸

Inspired by the results of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops, on December 15, 1981, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, in which he wrote: “[...] 18. The family, which is founded and given life by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives. Its first task is to live with fidelity the reality of communion in a constant effort to develop an authentic community of persons. The inner principle of that task, its permanent power and its final goal is love: without love the family is not a community of persons and, in the same way, without love the family cannot live, grow, and perfect itself as a community of persons. [...] 21. All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building, day by day, the communion of persons, making the family ‘a school of deeper humanity’: this happens where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys, and of sorrows.”

Short information about the most important agreements of last year’s Synod of Bishops in Rome was announced by Polish Bishops in the Pastoral Letter of the Episcopate of Poland for the Sunday of the Holy Family, on 28th December, 2014, saying: “Owing to Divine Providence we witnessed the third Special Synod of Bishops between 5th and 19th of October, during which Synod Fathers, unified with the Holy Father, reminded that the Gospel of the Family is a part of the fundamental Church’s message. Its continuous teaching reminds that family is a place of being acquainted with faith, sharing each other and building long-lasting relations. Family, which begins with holy matrimony, is still the biggest life’s desire for many young people. God craves for human’s happiness and this is why He wants married couples to accept and give themselves to each other, so the new life, the fruit of their love, would be born in the friendliest environment.”

I have cited several statements of both Catholic hierarchs and theologians to show that the standpoint represented by them concerning genesis, personal and social functions, and the most desirable and suggested family traits is characterized by clarity and coherence. The structure of Catholic teaching about family is simple and clear. Its foundations are embedded in the Holy Bible, which is influenced by precisely agreed and standardized interpretation as part of *Magisterium Ecclesiae*. Subsequently on the line of reasoning, which uses methodological principles suitable with theological studies, philosophy, and Catholic

¹⁸ Synod of Bishops: A Message to Christian Families in the Modern World—statement issued by the Synod Fathers to the global Catholic community on 24 October 1980. *Origins: NC Documentary Service* 10, no. 21 (November 6, 1980): 323–24.

social studies, at first, descriptive theses are formulated, describing family as a special kind of community called upon to realize accurately indicated goals and functions, and then—normative postulates are defined. Their task is to present fundamental duties of a human, who accepts guidelines of the Catholic doctrine and on their basis wants to shape his or her personal and family life. An additional element of the Catholic teaching about family is a reflection upon social, educational, and civilizational family functions, particularly making an effort to answer whether observed in contemporary world family model changes and spreading of other than Christian beliefs and aspirations connected with family's role in human and communities lives, has a positive or negative effect on one's moral condition and the quality and durability of relations creating human co-existence.

Human Being and Family in the Light of Gender Concept

The task to point out the most important anthropological assumptions creating the model of life that realizes *gender theory* indications is much harder than in the case of the Christian family concept. It is because the latter one deals with consistent, step by step creation of transparent system of mutual references between the essential components of the human nature exposed and formulated by philosophers, as well as conclusions drawn from them, which enable to shape the reality of family and marriage life in a certain way. Within *gender discourse* such transparency does not appear. One cannot say about a single, shared by all trends and authors, theoretical foundation that would be explicitly and easily identified as theological and philosophical underpinnings of the Catholic teaching about family.

One could try to indicate a few causes of this fact. One of them is that no international institution has been established, nor any environment that would be strong, solidary, and equipped with decisive and strong identity, which could play a part in integration of a multitude of followers with specific type of outlook focusing around the idea of gender redefinition. The way the situation shapes itself shows that in different countries and spheres of interest, scientific research and philosophical contemplation are conducted, political programs and ideological manifests are being created, which in large part are independent from each other, yet remain connected by general attitude towards reality—both biological and cultural, as well as a tendency to express one's opinion in a distinctive style and language, which is incidentally accompanied by (it has to be acknowledged

as necessary condition for affiliation into *gender discourses* group) specified metalanguage position, closely connected with sociological constructivism (it will be discussed later in the text). Then, we can only speak about certain family of intellectually related stances or informal movement associating followers of outlook that undermines traditional definition of gender and conservative vision of family life. However, this movement is not uniform, or theoretically coherent; moreover, it lacks internal solidarity. On the contrary, particular factions and orientations often remain in a severe conflict. Among others, Bell Hooks highlights this (writing admittedly about feminism, however, the same observations can be related to wider and even more internally incoherent gender movement): "People who write about contemporary feminism movement make it look like there is some solid base for feminists rules and beliefs, which made the foundation for this movement from the very beginning. Yet when feminism broke out for good in the 1960s, it appeared in different environments among women who often did not realize that there are other similar groups. Not even one precisely settled platform of this movement existed. [...] at the beginning, feminist theory was a space of critical analysis and image alteration about sexist system of gender roles. It was to ensure revolutionary project, which, if realized, would lead to change in patriarchal culture. [However,] feminists often conversed about the necessity of mass feminist movement creation, as no joint base that would enable its establishment existed. [...] Similarly to our life which is not invariable or static, so our theory must remain fluid, open, and react to new information."¹⁹ [...] "During much of the writing of *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* I worked in isolation. It was my hope that the publication of this work would draw me closer to feminist activists, especially black women. Ironically, some of the most outspoken black women active in feminist movement responded by trashing both it and me. While I expected serious rigorous evaluation of my work I was totally unprepared for the hostility and contempt shown to me by women whom I did not and do not see as enemies. [...] It does mean we have a basis for communication, that our political commitments should lead us to talk and struggle together. Unfortunately, it is often easier to ignore, dismiss, reject, and even hurt one another rather than engage in constructive confrontation."²⁰

The term 'gender,' edited by Karolina Krasuska in *Gender Encyclopedia*, starts with a definition of the term as a "category that refers to cultural and social character of norms of gender and its relations."²¹ Henceforth, however,

¹⁹ Bell Hooks [Gloria Jean Watkins], Preface to *Teoria feministyczna. Od marginesu do centrum*, 2nd ed. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013), 19, 21, 23.

²⁰ Bell Hooks [Gloria Jean Watkins], Acknowledgments to *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center* (Cambridge—Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984), vii.

²¹ Karolina Krasuska, "Gender," in *Encyklopedia gender: plec w kulturze*, ed. Monika Ruś-Gródzka et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, 2014), 155.

she writes (quite imprecisely) about “diffusion of ‘gender’ in the 1960s”²² about a “strategy” in which the “introduction of cultural category [gender] was to question biological determinism,”²³ whereas in the further part of her clarification, she uses “gender theory” term (in plural).²⁴

The second reason for the heterogeneity and ideological “fluency” of intellectual formations connected with the concept of gender (although it is a motive that critics, rather than followers and propagators, invoke), refers to the rule that identifies *gender discourses* as a part of wide postmodern concepts of the family. This thread is brought up and elaborated among others by Marguerite A. Peeters who writes: “Gender is a postmodern concept and postmodernism is a complex cultural phenomenon still not relatively well researched and poorly recognizable. [...] Considering its connection with the postmodern, gender is in principle ‘anti-theoretical.’ Talking about ‘gender theory’ is something paradoxical. Opposing to ideologies that existed in the past, it is impossible to define gender as a whole, to make a clear opinion, and define it [...]. Gender and its derivatives unceasingly slip this way from one interpretative choice to another, at the discretion of changing sociological trends and ideological positions. They are processes of changes, fluid, dynamic, prolific with new words, translations, interpretations, and ideological propositions. They invent themselves anew as new meanings are attributed to them.”²⁵ Archbishop Henryk Hoser, ordinary of the Warsaw-Prague Diocese, sees this problem in a similar way: “Gender is a word appearing in a language [...] from a certain point in time in different contexts, but its meaning remains little-known and is never precisely defined. Observers and participants of social life encounter new trends and phenomena, proposals of new laws and practices in fields, which seemed to be lucid and obvious. Such laws and practices are gender affiliation, relations between men and women, definition of the family, parental rights, participation of women and men in social, working, and political life. Not without surprise they discover demands and aspirations to redefine everything that makes the foundation of human existence in its constituent conditions. [...] Literature on the subject is not homogeneous, for it is spread and fragmentary. Aside from scientific studies, dissertations, and monographs of varied significance, mass media articles and popular mass media broadcasts are the prevailing ones. However, they lack precision, critical apparatus, historical continuity, and perspective acumen; conversely, they do not lack demagoguery.”²⁶

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 156.

²⁴ Ibid., 156–58.

²⁵ Marguerite A. Peeters, *The Gender Revolution. A Global Agenda. A Tool for Discernment*. Preface by Cardinal Robert Sarah (Dialogue Dynamics asbl, 2013) 39, 41.

²⁶ Henryk Hoser, “Przedmowa do wydania polskiego,” in Marguerite A. Peeters, *Gender — światowa norma polityczna i kulturowa. Narzędzie rozeznania* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2013), 5–6.

It does not mean, however, that statements that refer to the concept of gender favorably can be randomly defined. Against all appearances, changeability and senses fluency within the limits of this discourse is limited. Permissible are only those interpretations, which can efficiently contribute to the realization of primary goal that beacons authors and alternative sexual human conception propagators. Marian Machinek made an attempt to define that goal more precisely. He writes: "Social and cultural claims of that concept reach even further. They pursue an aim, which is a total reconstruction of society and radically different from previous understanding of human, ethics, and social politics."²⁷ Gabriele Kuby adds: "The above-mentioned things are being done in the name of ideology, which denies that human exists as man and woman and that this difference influences human's identity and is a necessary condition to prolong the human race. [...] Never before was there an ideology that would crave to destroy gender identity of man and woman and all standardized ethical sexual relations. Now it has appeared: it is known as 'gender mainstreaming.'"²⁸

Identification of trends belonging to *gender discourses* family is in addition hindered by the fact that particular authors determine frames of this concept either narrowly or widely. Some claim that it is possible to speak reasonably about *gender studies* only as "interdisciplinary studies and research concerning gender issues, understood as dynamic, processual, and non-essential," providing an "analysis of all social and political practices, individual and collective behavior, texts, words, pictures, signs and symbols that are arranged into a system of meanings, which forms and reproduces gender differences, normative and non-normative identities" in the center of attention.²⁹ Every attempt of moving gender category outside the area of research and scientific discussions, placing it in the sphere of comments characterized by persuasion, propaganda or ideology, inevitably leads to misunderstandings and serious interpretative mistakes. Such standpoint is represented, for example, by the group of signatories of The Open Letter of Scientific Environment of Teachers that Deals with Gender Issues [in Poland]. The letter includes, among others, the following statements: "Gender, in distinction from sex, means social and cultural gender, namely, the meaning that is assigned to concepts of femininity and masculinity, the roles that are designated for their members in relation to what sex they are, and the ways these roles are evaluated. Social and cultural gender appears in every society; however, how it is filled with content depends on culture, and changes both over time along with the society's development. Ideologization of the concept of gender by, among others, ascribing subject areas to it, which are not a part of

²⁷ Machinek, *Plaszczyzny konfrontacji*, 15.

²⁸ Gabriele Kuby, *Globalna rewolucja seksualna. Likwidacja wolności w imię wolności* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Homo Dei, 2013), 18–19.

²⁹ Bożena Chołuj, *Gender Studies*, in *Encyklopedia gender: płeć w kulturze*, ed. Monika Rudaś-Grodzka et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, 2014), 163.

it, that is, education, sexual preferences, transsexualism, and, above all, blaming about pornography, debauchery, and pedophilia is not only intellectual but also a moral overuse.”³⁰ Whereas according to other authors qualified as gender mainstreaming, practical consequences of scientific research create specificity of gender movement and lead to specific changes in the area of law, national institutions, customs and human beliefs, new self-realization projects, and new forms of sexual intercourse. For instance, a Polish scholar from the University of Warsaw, Magdalena Radkowska-Walkowicz speaks inwardly: “I must disagree with most people who comment in media and defend the term ‘gender’ and gender programs, that it is merely academic examination, category developed through social studies, so it should not be carried out outside of the academy. No, science is not neutral, it does not function in a social void. The emergence of such conviction that gender exists and sets our positions in society, not biology, has huge social and political consequences. It allows for the deconstruction of the traditional role of a woman, redefinition of various obligations and duties connected with sex. This is called political emancipation.”³¹

Being aware of provisional character and incompleteness of every possible interpretation, including the one we are currently looking into, we will have to try to point at several statements that recur so often that without any bigger risk could be acknowledged as foundations for the outlook that is dominated by the concept of gender. For this purpose one has to, or at least it is worth to, arbitrarily narrow the scope of our interests to the newest and the most radical gender strains, which “fit into the trend of so-called ‘strong’ postmodernism” as discussed by Machinek.³² Its supporters “understand the term of *gender* not only as indispensable cultural supplement of sex term, but also postulate resignation from the latter one, reducing only to the analysis of language determinants that shape gender identity in terms of specific culture.”³³ Typical postmodern feature of those solutions is ignoring what is real and introducing in the place of reality, arbitrarily constructed language product. Exponents of gender concept smoothly pass over the concept of nature lightly, refusing it any positive meaning and trying to convince everyone to the thesis that “the source of all normativeness is solely culture, not nature.”³⁴ In particular, “sexual (*gender*) identity is a cultural construct, independent on its biological basis,” and “what so far has been

³⁰ List Pastorski Episkopatu Polski na Niedzielę Świętej Rodziny 2014 r., accessed 1.06.2015, http://episkopat.pl/dokumenty/listy_pasterskie/6344.1,Glosic_z_radoscia_Ewangelie_o_rodzynie.html.

³¹ “Czemu służy straszenie ideologią gender?” Z Magdaleną Radkowską-Walkowicz rozmawia Tomasz Stawiszyński, in *Gender. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014), 346.

³² Machinek, *Płaszczyny konformacji*, 16.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

considered as ontological category is in fact an ontological and epistemic strict discipline of world perception.”³⁵

Another peculiar characteristic of postmodern discourse is an immediate transition from description to prescription with ease.³⁶ Practical conclusions from constructivist gender concept hit at, as it is not hard to guess, traditional family model. If one's gender is not both, predetermined and determining the choice between those gender roles, which are possible to realize considering existing biological and cultural conditions, then circumstances that lead to the creation of the lasting family bonds with other people and in particular with partner in marriage, do not occur. If I assume that my sexuality is a dynamic and changeable process, acquiring different values at various times, then I cannot assume simultaneously that in the long term, I will be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Strictly speaking, a change in the continuum of gender roles does not completely exclude the possibility of self-fulfillment of human on a way of performing one of traditionally defined roles in family life. However, it makes such possibility problematic, difficult, and very unlikely. Furthermore, it gets unattractive, for maintaining lasting family bond requires huge effort and plenty of everyday sacrifices, and simultaneously, it takes away the possibility of making changes connected with any redefinitions of one's sexual identity, which in discourses that belong to the gender mainstreaming is often presented as a basic acquisition won by sexual emancipation revolutionary movements.

The last issue, which has to be pointed out, is discourses' field structure discussing the problems of old and new gender identity—namely, that which Maria Korusiewicz, a researcher of contemporary culture trends, refers to as a “cultural geometry.”³⁷ ‘Gender mainstreaming’ is a common term in the literature on the subject that clearly indicates multiple trends of descriptions, narrations, and publications. Since there is the mainstream, then its sub-trends must exist as well—and they really do. There is the central problem, yet there are also marginal ones. This observation is suggestive of the famous book by Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center*. Admittedly, the author had in mind a different kind of spatial configuration;³⁸ however, there is nothing reprehensible

³⁵ Ibid., 17.

³⁶ See Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979), 41–46.

³⁷ See Maria Korusiewicz, *Geometrie kultury według René Girarda* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 2015).

³⁸ Bell Hooks explains a quasi-spatial configuration project of hers, a socially reformative anti-establishment thought as follows: “To be in the margin is to be part of the whole, but outside the main body. As Black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality. [...] Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both. This mode of

in thinking about the entire class of gender discourses as of intellectual landscape, stretching from the center towards the margin. If so, an important issue remains to be determined: what is the center, and what the margin. When we are looking for the answer to this question, two opposing hypotheses collide, and they both seem to be equally substantiated. The first hypothesis, inspired by the idea of Michael Kimmel, for example, promulgates that in the center there are similar beliefs to the following one: “Gender is not simply a system of classification by which biological males and biological females are sorted, separated, and socialized into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men. When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference. So the two tasks of any study of gender, it seems to me, are to explain both difference and inequality or, to be alliterative, difference and dominance.”³⁹ Therefore, in the center of thinking about gender, there stands a specific political project directed toward deep (many claim that plainly revolutionary) transformation of social and political reality in order to fully realize the postulate of gender roles equality and equality of rights between men and women, in its broadest sense, who are perceived in this discourse mainly as advocates and performers of those roles. Whereas a multiform and diverse string of interconnected nerve centers, both theoretical and practical, is extending around this central political project, thus, on the one hand, creating the front of scientific research concerning issues of sex and gender in their most important contexts and complications, from biology through neurosciences, ending up with social studies, political studies, law, and so forth, on the other—every form of practical, including ideological and propagandist, engagement in the creation of world movement of sexual emancipation. The second hypothesis will present the topography of “gender space” in a somewhat different manner. According to it, the center of this space consists of the brain effort of respectable scholars, in order to notice and read out anew, in the light of the newest accomplishments of science, facts, and processes, whose occurrence, and both social and cultural repercussions would remain unseen, if not for the arduous work of scholars. Such standpoint is represented for example by Maciej Gdula: “Gender studies in significant degree are creating knowledge with the use of scientific research procedures trying to find the answer for the question how the situation looks like. If we referred to our observations only, then we could for example think that women earn as much money as men or that they have as many children as they used to have in the past. However, if we gather appropriate numerical data and apply statistical calculations, we will see that women earn less and have fewer children than thirty years ago.

seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center (Hooks, preface to *Feminist Theory*, ix).

³⁹ Michael Kimmel, Introduction to *The Gendered Society*, in *Human Beings: An Engendered Species* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

The use of gender filter for analysis of many issues allows us often to discover a phenomenon, which we do not realize. [...] Although the death of the theory is promulgated, in principle, from several decades it does not hamper the development of old theories or creation of new ones. It is because we need more universal interpretations of reality. [...] Theories are not artificial systems deriving from arbitrarily established assumptions. They are rather an attempt of systematical answer to some basic questions.” [...] Taking under consideration that contemporary science is defined by examination procedures, creation of theories and arguments, gender studies are just a part of it. Studies are created as a part of it and are subjected to judgment. Different theories are developed and subjected to criticism.”⁴⁰ Around serious, responsible, critical, and fulfilling rigorous methodological criteria, gender group studies would later spread the margin, that is, various performances, marches, shouts, and other similar forms of marking the presence of gender issues in public space, next miscellaneous ways of popularizing main gender thoughts in mass media, publications, discussions, and finally forms of lobbying imposed by some local environments to put pressure on political class, both on a regional and global scale (for example by putting pressure on chosen UN agencies). Which of these hypotheses is closer to the truth? Honestly, on the basis of commonly available reference data we do not make a decision to indicate one solution to this problem. One can, at the most, arbitrarily follow personal sympathy or antipathy or some other undefined inner voice to support one or another resolution; however, cognitive value of such indication seems to be highly doubtful.

Additional difficulty in terms of particularization and identification of the scope of gender issues is that merely a thin and not always noticeable boundary (sometimes completely fading) divides gender trends from feminist and so-called post-feminist discourses. Some researchers, particularly those who are reconstructing the history of the problem, see in gender issues of a natural continuity of feminist movement and theories (see Krasuska 2014; Machinek 2012), whereas others claim that vital and irreducible differences occur between feminism and gender. For example, Michael Kimmel presents this matter in the following way: “[...] three decades of pioneering work by feminist scholars, both in traditional disciplines and in women’s studies, have made us aware of the centrality of gender in shaping social life. [...] when we think of the word ‘gender,’ what gender comes to mind? It is not unusual to find, in courses on the history of gender, psychology of gender, or sociology of gender, that the classroom is populated almost entirely by women. [...] we continue to act as if gender applied only to women. Surely the time has come to make gender visible to men. As the Chinese proverb has it, the fish are the last to discover the

⁴⁰ Maciej Gdula, “Odpowiedź na pytanie, czy gender studies to nauka,” in *Gender. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014), 97–103 passim.

ocean. [...] We need, I think, to integrate men into our curriculum. Because it is men—or, rather masculinity—who are invisible. [...] Men, themselves, are invisible as men. [...] Everywhere one turns there are courses about men, but virtually no information on masculinity.⁴¹

Closing Remarks

Multitudinous varieties of discourse concerning the issue of gender create a feeling of existence of a rich and diverse range of standpoints and motivations that persuade to take many different courses of action. Essentially, however, this diversity is reduced to a bipolar opposition set by two-component alternative. It refers to only two possible forms of “fundamental hope,” as Józef Tischner used to call this spiritual phenomenon. This thinker, often called the “Polish philosopher of hope,” once wrote: “Tight connection occurs between human hope and heroism, of which human feels capable of [...] if we are able to understand peculiar style that is characteristic for one’s heroism, then we will understand the real measurement of one’s hope. [...] hope also means that human often overruns reality which surrounds him or her, here and now, towards some future, possible worlds. [...] Hope proposes a new world. [...] the measure of hope is decided by values that we experience. Within the framework of hope, axiological acquaintance of the aspect of reality develops. [...] Values might not realize [...]. Human longing and effort might come to nothing. Nothing will ‘eternally rise’ human existence. And then the fate of values will come to ruin. Hope raises protest against such perspective. Gabriel Marcel says that hope shows up in the situation of trial and with its help human overcomes this situation. [...] Hope is the answer for something that lies deeper and is connected with fundamental situation of human existence. An adequate word to describe this situation is tragicity. [...] And so the basic axiological measurement of hope is dualistic. Hope with its external intention goes towards world and uncovers its motion towards values and values motion towards world. Hope with its internal intention goes towards human and exposes him or her as a special value, located in a situation of some tragicity. Responding to tragicity, hope accomplishes, every day, a difficult work of raising human towards his salvation.”⁴²

It seems purposeful to try to define reasons for the human involvement for or against the concept of outlook on the role and gender issues in Tischner’s category of fundamental hope. The decision (which has to be made and in one’s

⁴¹ Kimmel, Introduction to *The Gendered Society*, 5–7.

⁴² Józef Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei* (Kraków: Znak, 1975), 294–98 passim.

beliefs is just) of involvement with one party in the dispute cannot be shallow and perfunctory, and even if it is such at the very beginning, with commitment in actions to follow that promote the chosen way of thinking, one delves deeper within in, eventually discovering in what way it relates to “that which is connected with the fundamental situation of human existence,”⁴³ but also which value categories are identified as constituent to the human being, and finally what ways of salvation, from currently experienced or sensed tragicity, has to offer to the human. There are exactly two answers that can reach deep enough in this particular connection of anthropology, axiology, and soteriology (let’s emphasize: not necessarily confessionally understood), as indicated in Tischner’s work. Each of them is different and can be interpreted as a variant of one of those two fundamental answers after sufficiently detailed examination. They are as follows:

The first one is a hope for salvation of the integral truth about human and both human nature and essence, truth developed and constantly deepened for over two thousand years of the development of the Mediterranean civilization. We claim that the fullest expression of this truth found its reflection in Christian personalistic anthropology, but many other human concepts exist that are essentially convergent with principal thesis of personalism that belong to the same intellectual tradition and are based on the same historical roots.

The hope for salvation of the global project of interpersonal order is strictly connected with this hope and is based on foundations of natural family bonds joint with particular kinds of love (betrothed, parental, children’s love towards parents, adult’s and children’s love towards close and distant relatives). This project of order is surrounded by many cultural forms of family protection and cultivation in order to make it strong, lasting, fertile, and creative. Such family enables, to people that are part of it, correct growth, ensures the sense of security and acceptance, strengthens people in their dignity and unique value, and gives a strong and favorable base for taking actions for the well-being of others and of community.

A *conditio sine qua non* of giving rise to and lasting of this hope is faith, that social structure based on concerted action of people who find a strong sustenance in monogamistic communities of many generations’ families of well-developed sense of internal bond is the optimal model of functional and lasting social order, which guarantees solidarity and support in difficult moments in life. This faith does not exclude perceiving numerous pathologies and shortcomings in practical attempts of realization of family and social community model, but connects with the belief that mistakes in realization of rules of family and social intercourse do not deny rightness of those rules.

Contrariwise seems the second type of fundamental hope. It occurs in more and more cases predominantly triggered by emerging from existential tragedies

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, 298.

that this first type of hope, deeply inscribed in our cultural tradition, is dying. Under the influence of extremely difficult life experiences, attitude towards culture, tradition, and customs one submits to drastic reevaluation. Among some representatives of feminist or gender theories, the natural need for manifestation of those experiences and sharing one's own experiences of suffering with others appears. Such stories can be found, for example, in Judith Butler and Gloria Watkins (better known by her pen name bell hooks). The first of them writes among other things: "I grew up understanding something of the violence of gender norms: an uncle incarcerated for his anatomically anomalous body, deprived of family and friends, living out his days in an "institute" in the Kansas prairies; gay cousins forced to leave their homes because of their sexuality, real and imagined; my own tempestuous coming out at the age of 16; and a subsequent adult landscape of lost jobs, lovers, and homes. All of this subjected me to strong and scarring condemnation but, luckily, did not prevent me from pursuing pleasure and insisting on a legitimating recognition for my sexual life. It was difficult to bring this violence into view precisely because gender was so taken for granted at the same time that it was violently policed."⁴⁴ Grown up in extremely difficult conditions on the margin of society, the author of *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center*, recollects her traumatic experiences from early life: "As Black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality. Across those tracks were paved streets, stores we could not enter, restaurants we could not eat in, and people we could not look directly in the face. Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as janitors, as prostitutes, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter that world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town. There were laws to ensure our return. To not return was to risk being punished."⁴⁵

Causes that invoke such tragic and stigmatic experiences in reasoning that propagates gender are not perceived in a specific connection of casual and random, although inevitable and cruel in the perspective of individuals or entire social groups. As a reaction to a long-lasting and painfully experienced injustice, inequality and other manifestations of lack of tolerance and neighbor love, general theories containing accusation towards the entire norm, belief, directive, and action system are created. Then, fundamental hope directs itself towards radical perspective of system change. Neither immediate repair actions, nor cosmetic reformatory procedures in a small, local scale are considered sufficient enough. If the change is to be radical, then it has to be carried out at the roots

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, Preface to *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), xx.

⁴⁵ Hooks, Preface to *Feminist Theory*, ix.

(*radix*) of evil and heal them. Where are those roots situated? For the radical gender revolutionists the answer is simple. Incorrectly shaped cultural norms, especially those, which are connected with gender and sexual perception of every human being have to be indicated. These norms, effective in the extent of cultural practice, have great power, owing to which effective pressure is put on individuals forcing them to an imposed and fixed scenario of social and sexual roles and behaviors. These forced scenarios do not take into account subjective feelings of potential role performers. None of the guardians of tradition want to differentiate between those who—by impersonating socially accepted roles—find their life's calling and derive deep, personal satisfaction, and those who feel pressure of imposed roles as cruel violence, plight, enslavement, and dehumanization.

The principle of self-defense, respected in any civilized society, opens the field for necessary actions, whose purpose is to salvage the sense of personal dignity, protect from humiliation and marginalization, and enforce the law to derive satisfaction from individually preferred lifestyle. And the only way to achieve this goal, in the opinion of like-minded, runs through the significant transformation of the ways of thinking and valuation. Everything that leads to injustice, harm, and undeserved suffering should be abandoned, starting from the deepest foundations of cultural coexistence that have been in place until now.

One out of challenged fundamentals, which becomes the victim of the revolutionary zeal, is the so-called ontological realism: if reality is the source of oppression, then this is reality that should be denied. Logical (although actually it should be called: paralogical) equation of assumptions of ontological realism, with claims characteristic for constructionist positions leads to completely wrong (from the point of view of the classical theory of truth) convictions that every human being has the unlimited right to recognize any view as true, and the right to be guided by principles which seem to be compatible with arbitrarily accepted convictions about reality. Therefore, whether we claim (standing on one side of the dispute) that a human body owns each-time specified psychophysical constitution, which determines the affiliation to one of the two sexes—male or female—or exhibits certain anomalies based on simultaneous co-partnership, however, not to the same extent, female or male features; or we claim with conviction (standing in opposition to the previous position) that only one's own desire and self-determination of will decide what is our identification in terms of sex and gender—it only depends on a free choice according to the principle of freedom of speech, thought, and belief. If one does not intend to acknowledge that one's own body compressed together with its psyche objectively defines one's belonging to the one biologically specified sexual category, one should be free to refuse, or even provide cultural tools for the creation of a new sexual identity totally independently on the laws of nature. It is useless to argue that science and common sense are the protectors of objective facts, verified empiri-

cally and expounded on the basis of fundamental principles of nature. One may then meet with covetous counter-arguments, for example expressed as follows: "In attacks on gender studies the argument about unscientific approach occurs with a disarming naiveté. The attackers appraise theories and studies notably inspired by the feminist thought, as if there is clarity, what science is and how to cultivate it. [...] it is tacitly assumed that it is objective, neutral, and coherent. Owing to that we can recognize reality and submit it to scrutiny. [...] but such concepts of science have not been accepted in its frameworks for at least fifty years. [...] the vision of science as an edifice of knowledge which is based on consistent principles, and which is aware of the shape of reality, was questioned by logicians. [...] the belief in neutrality and objectivity of science was strained by the sociology of knowledge and the study of science [...]" etc.⁴⁶ Therefore, there is no distinguished truth-discourse, everything is subjected to arbitrary and subjective judgments, in a word—*As You Like It*.

Whether this road—created out of despair and disillusionment, sense of grievance and longing for justice, however, founded on the negation of evident truths of logic, the natural sciences and metaphysics; the road that leads towards equal-validation of any convictions, just to satisfy subjective tastes and emotions—may change the world for the better? There are no visible and rational presumptions which would indicate it. If we equate all the views, true and false, we will deprive ourselves of the only one certain basis on which one may find support, in order to conduct, in an effective way, any long-term and wide-ranging reform—because we will be followed by the few, who will be convinced (without having stronger reasons than our own fervent belief and personal charm) that this is us who are right. However, estimation of the destructive strength included in a significant majority of concepts promoting the idea of gender will be presented in a different way. To a large extent, regardless of the topic of presently examined argument, there is still present an aggressive aversion to the traditional (in a postmodern language called "conservative") attitudes and values. Even there, where the proponents of gender studies speak out, for instance, on issues such as social policy, raising largely legitimate and fair demands leading to the more effective protection of a family by a government, it happens that such action is accompanied by hostile emotional aura directed against a personalistic family model. A good example of such irrational confusion of reasonable expectations and unjustified prejudices is included in *Gender Anthology. The Guidebook* the text which was written by Dorota Szelewa from the European University Institute in Florence. She writes, among other things: "In the 70s [...] (neo)Marxist feminism interpreted the role of the state in categories of institutionalized oppression, whose essential part was the construction of social policy. On the other hand, some countries started to change

⁴⁶ Gdula, *Odpowiedź na pytanie*, 94–95.

the anachronistic social policy, supporting strictly traditional model. [...] the state not infrequently got behind with social changes—when the shape of the institution of social policy supported, in an active way, the traditional model of marriage and family. Together with the increased development of social entitlements, the stronger tension was arousing between new social needs and the undeveloped institutions of welfare state. However, the role of the state as the institutionalized patriarchy was not so obvious. [...] Most of the post-communist countries do not follow the trend in the Western social policy described above, and the reason for aversion to the idea of gender, feminism, gender equality, and new forms of partnerships/families, is caused by the fact that these notions are understood as an attack on family values, compared with perceived as the oppressive policy of the socialist state. [...] After the collapse of the old system, the countries of the Eastern Europe wanted to ‘go back to normality,’ in a public debate a conservative rhetoric concerning the roles of gender appeared, and these countries were marked by the wave of antifeminism. Until now, the governments of the Eastern Europe seem to bewitch the reality, enforcing only those instruments of social policy, which support the traditional division of roles in a family, by the extension of paid parental leaves, without guaranteeing such leaves to the other parent, and neglecting care services for the youngest. It does not bring results—we are at the bottom of Europe in terms of fertility. Other waves of the moral panic and the search for an enemy in the form of gender will not change anything [...].²⁴⁷

It must be admitted that in many countries and communities, the ongoing dispute over the significant hope, connected with the search for the optimum model of realization of gender roles in the psychosomatic and socio-cultural field is marked by many harsh words and phrases, which are not always adequately thought-out, often unjust and unfair, sometimes blatantly false, revealing superficial knowledge or even ignorance, and from time to time—deliberate malice. I prefer not to give specific examples, although they can be easily found while visiting websites suggested by the search engine, after entering the password gender, or while tacking how the existence of this issue is presented in mainstream media.⁴⁸ But it is not the point to stigmatize anyone for using a crude

⁴⁷ Dorota Szelera, “Gender w polityce społecznej: nie ma odwrotu,” in *Gender. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014), 157–164 *passim*.

⁴⁸ In this case, it must be clarified that current affairs programs and debates organized by TV stations do not reflect the real views of people who take part in these media spectacles, since such performances are carefully staged according to “higher-order logic” and subordinated to the main strategic objectives created by television. These objectives include: ensuring high viewership, providing mass entertainment for an audience and attracting numerous advertisers. These strategic objectives correspond to the carefully selected tactical solutions. Thus, as Anna Nacher, the media expert claims, “the analysis of the characteristics of TV discourse leads to [...] the idea the television is a sphere organized by conflicts, and hence it is open to multiple readings and identifications.” In reference to the presentation of the issues of sex and gender which

language, which is rich in words that hurt. It is clear, that these are reprehensible actions which definitely should not take place. However, the actual problem lies even deeper. An assumption, that if an individual human being was given the unlimited right to shape one's own subjective norm of the sexual behavior and was allowed to ignore the consequences of one's own, the limitations of shaped psychophysical constitution and replace it by any phantasms on the subject of one's own sexual identity, then we would delete the reasons of dangerous pathologies and we would take a step towards a more perfect world, would be a dangerous and harmful illusion. Multiple causes—often important, often connected with a large scale of experienced sufferings and resentments caused by them—for which people eagerly get carried away by suggestive stories about a possible liberation from constricting biological ties, psychology, and oppressive social structures. The scenario of radical transformation of the world cannot be uncritically accepted in the name of hope for the actual independence from rules and orders imposed on a man by the objective laws of nature, or left without a comment and without a strong response towards reiterated efforts to discredit many centuries of achievements of philosophical anthropology, supported by the results of research and the theological reflection. In the name of recklessly, superficially, and one-sidedly understood freedom of an individual, we should not deprive ourselves of the chance for a real spiritual growth, which is possible only if instead of taking offense at the voice of truth, we will do everything to make this voice clearly audible again and try to do our best to correlate the sense of one's own life with earnestly acquired knowledge about what reality really is, and not be content with solely wishful thinking.

are present in television program, the author comes to a conclusion that "the conflict between the opinions of critics [...] and the typical tastes of millions of viewers, who just sit in front of television set [...] may be treated as a conflict about the reading of identity categories. At stake in this game is to remove from the visual field (and cultural valence) the sexual identity which is unceasingly categorized as a conflict. More than that, it is the conflict with constantly postponed ideological closure" (Nacher, *Telepleć. Gender w telewizji doby globalizacji* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2008, pp. 157–58)). Krzysztof Wielecki very clearly and bluntly describes the same mechanism of the advantage of the ludic function over the substantive function which is visible in television programs. The author writes about the way in which media present the phenomenon of homosexuality: "an example of this status of the social dialogue is the fabricated by media discourse about homosexuality, the main instrument of worldwide fun. In order to increase viewership, a man whose suffering can be seen in his eyes is shown, with his funny way of being. He distributes pamphlets about the sexual life, the pamphlets we would not like to read even if they were about heterosexual practices. However, on the other side, there is a fascist boor, whose greatest achievement is his heterosexuality. [...] Why such people hold discussions in the public sphere? Because it is more spectacular, shocking, sharp, and amusing. It is the logic of mass culture carnival that rules here as well" (Wielecki, "Postny karnawał kryzysu postnowoczesności," in *Kryzys postindustrialny interpretacje, prognozy. Perspektywa europejska*, ed. Piotr Mazurkiewicz and Krzysztof Wielecki (Warszawa: Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007), 18.

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Krzysztof Wieczorek

Famille dans le monde contemporain: Doctrin catholique sociale face à l'idéologie de genre

Résumé

L'homme contemporain se trouve face à un dilemme important. En cherchant sa propre identité et son modèle de vie dans la communauté humaine, il peut choisir une des deux attitudes qui sont en principe contradictoires. La première, formée par Catholic Social Teaching et établie sur le fondement de l'anthropologie chrétienne, conduit non seulement à l'auto-identification dans le cadre d'un modèle ayant deux valeurs et concernant l'être humain comme un homme ou une femme, mais aussi à l'autoréalisation dans le cadre d'un des rôles traditionnels sociaux et culturels, propres à un genre biologique déterminé. La seconde s'appuie sur l'idée de la déconstruction postmoderne de la catégorie de sexe, ce qui conduit en effet à la dilution de l'identité sexuelle et à la négation des critères qui étaient élaborés durant des siècles et qui concernent le choix de son propre chemin de vie prenant en considération l'opposition et la complémentarité d'un homme et d'une femme. L'article juxtapose les arguments en faveur de la première et de la seconde option ; en plus, il examine les conséquences probables des choix individuels faits dans le cadre de cette alternative.

Mots clés : famille, genre, doctrine catholique sociale, compétences axiologiques, déconstruction de la réalité

Krzysztof Wieczorek

La famiglia nel mondo contemporaneo — dottrina sociale cattolica e gender

Sommario

L'uomo contemporaneo si trova di fronte a un grande dilemma. Nella ricerca di una propria identità e di un modello di vita all'interno della comunità umana, egli ha una scelta tra due atteggiamenti fondamentalmente inconciliabili fra loro. Il primo, formato da Catholic Social Teaching

e basato sui fondamenti dell'antropologia cristiana, porta all'auto-identificarsi nell'ambito di un modello umano bivalente come uomo o donna e all'auto-realizzarsi in uno dei tradizionali ruoli sociali e culturali appropriati per un determinato sesso biologico. Il secondo si basa sull'idea postmoderna di decostruzione della categoria "sex", che di conseguenza porta alla disgregazione della propria identità sessuale e alla negazione dei criteri di scelta, elaborati nel tempo, del proprio stile di vita, tenendo conto dell'opposizione e della complementarità tra uomo e donna. L'articolo mette a confronto gli argomenti a favore della prima e della seconda opzione e analizza le probabili conseguenze delle scelte individuali di tale alternativa.

Parole chiave: famiglia, gender, dottrina sociale cattolica, competenze assiologiche, decostruzione della realtà